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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the population served by the Dearborn Pre-Vocational Unit of the Schools for Children (Cambridge, Massachusetts) and discusses the Unit's major program components for meeting student needs. The needs of the behavior disordered/learning disabled adolescent population include basic academic skills, improved self image, alternatives to acting out behavior, academic and vocational guidance, and experience in positive and trusting relationships. Individual needs are met through the assessment and remediation program, academic and vocational instruction program counseling and management program, and the job preparation-work program. A breakdown of specific staff and responsibilities illustrates the various program components. The 3 year program is geared toward academic remediation taught through a Life Experience Curriculum and behavior shaping. Other characteristics of the program include parent contact, daily one on one remediation with over 60% of the students, and self contained classrooms structured to ensure a safe and consistent environment. The management system involves a four step process: a warning for inappropriate behavior, timeout if the behavior continues, recording of incident on a dismissal slip, and an interview with the director or program coordinator upon accumulation of three dismissal slips during a school day. The career component runs 14 on campus job experiences as well as coordinating and monitoring private job market sites. (SB)

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Integrated Services at a Pre-Vocational Setting for L.D. and B.D. Adolescents

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Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (60th, Houston, TX, April 11-16, 1982).

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ABSTRACT

The content of the paper describes characteristics of adolescents, 13 - 20, who are currently enrolled in the three year Dearborn Pre-Vocational Unit of the Schools for Children, Inc. in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The needs of these adolescents are addressed and a description of how they are being met is presented through an explanation of the major components of the program. Integration of these major components is an important key to the success of the program.

Adolescent characteristics presented are anti-social and sometimes violent behavior, exhibition of predictable traits and similar histories, and categorization as learning disabled and/or behavior disordered. Poor academic achievement, below grade level functioning, and low-self-image, are other, compounding characteristics.

The specific needs of this population include the raising of basic academic skills, bolstering of self-image through consistent successful experiences, finding alternatives to acting out behavior, learning and experiencing greater impulse and self control, experiencing a greater selection of academic and vocational choices, developing work habits and job entry level skills, and experiencing positive and trusting relationships. Success, structure, and consistency, as well as a safe, fair, and predictable environment must be present in order to ensure that the specific needs are met.

The program offers four unique components which, through integration, meet the needs of this population.

Assessment

Each student is assessed twice yearly by the resource personnel. This diagnosis assists the classroom teacher in preparation of materials and determines which students will be referred to the resource room for individual tutoring.

Academic and Vocational Instruction

Presented in self-contained classrooms and shops of ten students, master teacher, and assistant teacher. Academic instruction reinforced in resource room and by resource teachers also working, twice a week, in classrooms. Life Experience Curriculum is teacher prepared and designed to meet the needs of the students as diagnosed in the fall, revolves around the shop project, and includes related math, language arts, history, science, survival skills, and career awareness/job opportunities. The student participates in 12 L.E.C. units during his/her three years at the program including woodworking, drafting, food service, power mechanics, electricity, bike repair, and construction.

Counseling and Management

Communication skills and informational counseling are major facets of the counseling and management component. The Director and Program Coordinator facilitate the management and counseling component through individual interviews as result of dismissal, and through weekly class meetings.

The counseling and management component assumes that the responsibility for behavior is placed on the student in the form of alternative choices. It also assumes the school is a successful and rewarding place to be. Limits and consequences are consistent throughout the program. The counseling and management component is reinforced through the social worker who individually counsels 40% of the population, facilitates a weekly social skills group, and monthly chairs parent meetings.

Job Preparation and Career Awareness

This three year curriculum component is presented in the classroom by the classroom teachers, and is reinforced through small groups and individual counseling with the job preparation coordinator, counselor, and counseling interns. It meets the needs of the adolescent, through, among other things, decision making training, exploratory visits to job sites in conjunction with specific shops/L.E.C. units, assessment of vocational interest, worker shadowing, job search monitoring, future placement counseling, and work experience which is either on-campus or at private placement.

Other facets of the program designed to future address the needs of the adolescent are the all school physical education and bi-weekly special projects programs. These two facets allow the student to interact with other students and teachers and gives them the opportunity to further develop shop-related skills.

All components and facets of the three-year program are monitored by the Director and Program Coordinator. They also model and set the tone for students and staff: non-threatening, non-violent, safe, secure, and success-oriented.

The key to the success of the program is the integration of the major components and other facets of the program. Completion and growth in the areas of academic and vocational instruction, communication and social skills, job preparation and career awareness ensures that the adolescent leaves the Pre-Vocational Unit as a functional, productive member of working society.

Integrated Services at a Pre-Vocational Setting for L.D. and B.D. Adolescents

At this moment there is a large population of adolescents, across the country, that are not in school. They are on the streets or in the game arcades. They are flirting with the law or just plain staying at home. Their choices are limited and their future is bleak. They can be found in rural settings, suburban paradises, and of course the inner city. Some have been terminated from schools because of violent and other anti-social behavior, and others have chosen to quit. Some are still enrolled in school but simply just don't go.

As a group they exhibit predictable traits and similar histories. They often are clinically catagorized B.D. or L.D., and the majority seem non-academically inclined and functioning well below grade level. They have met with few successes and have low self-images. To bolster their images and to control and manipulate what they perceive to be a threatening environment, they have adopted a limited set of negative behaviors and avoidance techniques. They favor indifference, scorn and antagonism to attempting even the most simple task. They are afraid of ridicule and failure and generally believe that no one can be trusted. They compensate for their lack of experiences and successes with grandiose boasting, threatening behavior and dangerous activities. They seem to have difficulty verbalizing their needs.

If these individuals are not assisted in time, their future, realistically, will be bleak indeed. They will become part of the growing mass of unfulfilled and unproductive adolescents that are falling through the gaps of the regular educational process in this country today.

There is a school in Cambridge, Massachusetts which is reaching out to these individuals described above. It is part of The Schools for Children, Inc. and is called the Dearborn Pre-Vocational Unit. It was designed and has evoked as a school that deals specifically with the needs of this population. It does this in an integrated way that stresses success, structure and consistency throughout the program. The school succeeds because it meets the specific needs of this adolescent population.

Specific needs of this population:

1. To raise basic academic skills.
2. To improve self-image through consistent successful experiences.
3. Find alternatives to acting out behavior.
4. Learn and experience greater impulse and self control.
5. Be guided, and experience a greater selection of choices - both academically and vocationally.
6. Develop work habits and job entry level skills.
7. Assistance in developing skills to verbalize individual needs.
8. Experience positive and trusting relationships.

In order for any of these needs to be fulfilled a safe, fair, and predictable environment must be created.

The Dearborn Pre-Vocational Unit responds to each new student with 5 basic assumptions:

1. Each student has individual strengths and that can be exploited for general success.
2. All students want to learn and succeed.

3. An environment can be created that is safe and conducive to students learning. (This limits the need for negative acting out behavior.)

4. No student is crazy and will respond if normal behavior is expected and encouraged.

5. If students are given adequate information they will make positive correct choices.

The unit reaches the individual through the consistant integration of 4 unique facets: (1) the assessment and remediation program, (2) the academic and vocational instruction program, (3) the counseling and management program, and (4) the job preparation-work program.

In order to fully understand how the various components come together to serve, a breakdown of specific staff and responsibilities will be necessary.

Administration

Director

The tone of the school is created and modeled by administration. The director creates a non-violent supportive model through his daily interaction with staff and students.

Responsibilities

1. set tone
2. crisis intervention and interviewing
3. overall fiscal management
4. staff supervision/program management
5. development
6. parent contact

Program Coordinator

The program coordinator acts as resource person for both staff and students.

Responsibilities

1. reinforce tone set by director
2. crisis intervention and interviewing
3. educational and vocational curriculum consulting and monitoring
4. management of shop and curriculum budgets.
5. staff development and supervision
   a. weekly supervision meetings with individual staff
6. vocational and shop training for staff
7. grant writing
8. monitoring of shop equipment and purchasing of supplies
9. parent contact

Administrative Assistant

Responsibilities

1. organize and keep all records
2. liaison with transportation agencies
3. monitoring of student attendance and parent contact
4. surrogate mother and support person for students

Classroom Teacher

The teachers work out of self-contained classrooms. They are expected to supervise and be with their students during the full school day. They are required to teach four separate shop areas per year as well as related academics (math, reading, writing, history, science, language arts). They also act as problem solver-counselor and behavior monitors for students.

Responsibilities

1. organization and appearance of self-contained classroom
2. develop curriculum and plan shop projects
3. academic and vocational instruction
4. behavior shaping
   a. group
   b. individual
5. crisis intervention
6. supervision and training of teacher assistant.
7. parent contact

Support Services

Social Worker

The social worker plays a primary supportive role in the school.

Responsibilities

1. parent support group
2. student social skills group
3. coordinate clinical services
4. staff consultation and clinical development
5. individual counseling
6. crisis intervention

766 Coordinator

Responsibilities

1. liaison with various school districts
2. student intake
3. public relations
4. chairs all core evaluations
5. placement for 3rd year students

Job-Prep Coordinator
1 Vocational Counselor
2 Counseling Interns

Responsibilities

1. formal and informal vocational assessment
2. consultation with teachers around job curriculum and job issues
3. job site visitations
4. job placement
   a. sheltered
   b. private sector

5. work habit monitoring
6. vocational guidance counselor
7. career counseling

Resource Room
1 Resource Room - Reading Specialist
3 Resource Room Teachers

The students academic program begins with the fall assessment program - administered and diagnosed by the resource room staff.

Responsibilities

1. assessment program and individual write-ups on all students
2. one-on-one tutoring
   a. prescriptive individual remediation
3. team teaching in the classroom
4. teacher consultation and staff development
5. student library
6. enrichment groups

Physical Activity Leader
½ Time

Responsibilities

1. runs weekly class gym periods
2. purchase and care of gym equipment
3. organize all schools gym period on Mondays
4. physical assessments
5. one-on-one physical remediation

Students are accepted at Pre-Voc starting from age 13. They come from all over the greater metropolitan area of Greater Boston. The group is racially and sexually mixed. They are referred to the school by individual school districts, parents, courts and other social agencies.

They enter into a three year program geared towards academic remediation and behavior shaping. Most academics are taught through vocational text called L.E.C. units (Life Experience Curriculum), which are prepared by the classroom teacher for their specific group. During the three years the student will explore 9 different shop areas.

First Year - woodworking, drafting, food service and power mechanics

Second Year - electricity, bike repair, food service and woodworking

Third Year - printing, business skills, drafting, and construction

At the end of the three years the student, with assistance from the individual school district, 766 Coordinator, job prep coordinator, and the classroom teacher, will be mainstreamed back into a less restrictive environment in the public setting. The particular placement will depend on the student's individual abilities at that time and the students' choices and decisions made while at Pre-Voc. Yearly, 90% of all third year students of Pre-Voc are placed back in less restrictive public settings to further or complete their secondary education.

The overall structure of the school is designed to give the individual student a safe and consistent environment in which to grow and find a positive identity, to raise his/her basic academic skills and to learn basic

decision making skills so that they can realistically plan and make positive choices for their future development. The program affords the student three years, at a critical period, in which to catch up and take control of their lives.

The school takes a holistic approach to each student. This means that parent contact is essential and encouraged greatly. Classroom teachers, and other school personnel are constantly in touch with the students families to report progress or to discuss any particular problems. Other agencies involved with the student are contacted and kept abreast of the student's progress.

The student's program begins at Pre-Voc, in the fall, with a complete diagnostic assessment administered by the resource room staff. The resource room staff completes, from the results of these tests, a student profile write-up which is shown to and discussed with the classroom teacher and placed in the student's file. The write-up includes current reading, spelling and math levels, student's strengths and weaknesses, learning style of the student and specific recommendations for the student's future education. It is also determined, through these assessments, which students will receive daily one-on-one remediation in the resource room. Over 60% of all students receive daily one-on-one remediation in the resource room. This includes skill building in reading, spelling, comprehension, writing and math. The resource personnel further integrate their expertise by consulting weekly with classroom teachers on individual students progress and teaching techniques. They also enter the classroom twice weekly to teach class units on writing, reading and other basic English skills.

The main focal point for the students development is the self-contained classroom. Each classroom has no more than 10 students and two teachers. This group will spend 90% of the school year together, forming relationships, working in academic and vocational areas and building projects. The only times the student is not with his/her teacher and group is during resource room time, during special project periods, (extracurricular activities, offered twice a week by the staff for students to participate in. Examples include: baking, blockprinting, first aid, construction, leather work, horticulture, arts and crafts, talent show, yearbook, autobody and reading groups), and during the weekly all school gym period.

The classroom is very structured to ensure a safe and consistent environment for students to learn. Rules and expectations are simple and clearly stated. These expectations are standard and integrated throughout the school. The student therefore can predict and know that the expectations for him/her will be consistent no matter who the student is interacting with. With this population of student, testing and acting-out is expected but never accepted at Pre-Voc. Consequences are clearly defined for acting-out behavior and administered by the classroom teachers and support personnel immediately.

The management system at Pre-Voc is a four step process that is integrated throughout the school. In the classroom, or other activity area, inappropriate behavior (behavior that is disruptive to the group and learning) is met with a warning. If the behavior continues the student is asked to take a time out. A time out is a five minute period in which the student removes him/herself from the group or activity to a designated area. Before the staff person

asks the student to return a brief explanation of the inappropriate behavior is given and positive alternatives suggested. This incident is recorded on a dismissal slip. If a student receives three time outs during a school day he/she is dismissed from the group and asked to go to the office, where the director or program coordinator will interview the student using information from the dismissal slip. The dismissal slip is a record of the student's behavior, the teachers intervention and the student's response. During the interview inappropriate behavior is outlined and appropriate alternatives suggested. If the classroom teacher recommends it, the student may then return to the group. Parents are contacted and informed of the incidents. If more serious incidents occur, (fighting, drugs, weapons) the student may be suspended and will not be allowed back to school without a parent conference. The key to this system is that all limits and consequences are clear and known to the student. They are the same and integrated throughout the school. The responsibility for behavior is placed on the student in the form of alternative choices of behavior. All staff are consistent in defining and upholding these limits.

The behavior system would not work if school was not a successful and rewarding place to be. The school experience is made successful by the use of a failure proof curriculum called an L.E.C. unit. These students are non-academically inclined, and need a hook to become involved in traditional academic areas. The project orientation, hands on experience of the shop, along with the vocational L.E.C. units provide this hook. The L.E.C. manual are teacher prepared and geared to the reading levels and

and abilities of the group. All academic areas and other related academics are taught through the text of the L.E.C. units.

Why the L.E.C.?

I. Flexible

a. revolves around a shop project

b. geared to the level of students abilities

c. responsive to changing needs

d. motivating by integrating with shop experience

II. Adaptable

a. areas that can be included:

1. survival skills

2. shop related math

3. history of shop area

4. related science of shop area

5. can be used with different level students

6. career awareness and job opportunities within the various shop clusters

The program of Pre-Voc aids in the development of the student in four areas; academic, vocational, social and career planning and awareness. While behaviors are dealt with directly in the classroom by the classroom teachers, individual counseling is provided by the social worker and clinical component. The social worker counsels approximately 40% of all students weekly as well as offering support to the students' families through a parent support group. This component is integrated through weekly consultation with classroom teachers and other relevant personnel. The social worker is also involved in inservice training for all staff periodically during the year.

The jobs and career awareness component is the last integrated part of the pre-vocational component. The majority of these students will go on to become productive members of the working community. They need to be guided in career options and choices as well as being assisted in developing job search skills and productive work habits. The career component runs 14 on campus job experiences as well as coordinating and monitoring private job market sites.

On campus jobs:

4 breakfast service workers (breakfast restaurant run by students in the morning)

1 coffee service money collector

1 student business bookkeeper

1 printing business work

2 furniture repair business workers

2 building maintenance people

1 clerical helper

2 car wash and simonizing business workers

Roughly 70% of the student population experiences work related training during the academic year. This training is monitored and recorded by the job prep coordinator and his staff. The jobs program is integrated into the total program through the L.E.C. units. A three year systematic curriculum becomes an integral part of the total curriculum.

Job Preparation

First Year

1. general orientation
2. physical skills inventory
3. career awareness activities
4. decision making training
5. exploratory visits to job sites in conjunction with specific shops

Second Year

1. assessment of vocational interest
2. decision making counseling
3. exploratory visits to job sites
4. worker shadowing
4. work experience

Third Year

1. individual job search monitoring
2. bi-weekly decision making contracts
3. future placement counseling
4. work experience keying on private job placements

The key to the integration of services at the Pre-Vocational Unit is that all relevant needs of the adolescents are met using this approach. Student progress and other relevant information is shared by each individual service program through consultation, training and weekly meetings. All involved staff know where the student stands in any given part of his/her program. Through this team approach, and the awareness it affords, the student is more easily guided through the successful completion and growth in the 4 main objective areas: academic instruction, vocational instruction,

communication and social skills, and career awareness and work skills. With these tools the adolescent leaves the Pre-Vocational program with a better than average chance of continuing his/her skill development and becoming a successful, productive member of working society.